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23 December 1963

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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DAILY BRIEF

South Vietnam: Amid reports of continuing popular apathy and disenchantment, there are scattered signs that the new government may be shaking off the lethargy that has slowed counterinsurgency efforts since the November coup.

A long-term pacification operation has been launched in a northern coastal province. Intensified operations are also planned in two provinces just south of Saigon where military command relationships have been reshuffled. Security conditions in this area had been deteriorating, and the Viet Cong had made significant gains in the confusion following the coup.

The new initiatives were probably stimulated in part by concern over lagging support of the government among key groups in South Vietnam. Junior military officers have been critical of the lack of strong leadership and direction from the new regime, particularly in psychological warfare. The educated class is said to have little confidence in the viability of the regime, believing another coup is likely.

The US Embassy reports no evidence that the Communists have successfully penetrated and influenced the student leadership in Saigon, which seems to be largely anti-Communist and anti-neutralist.

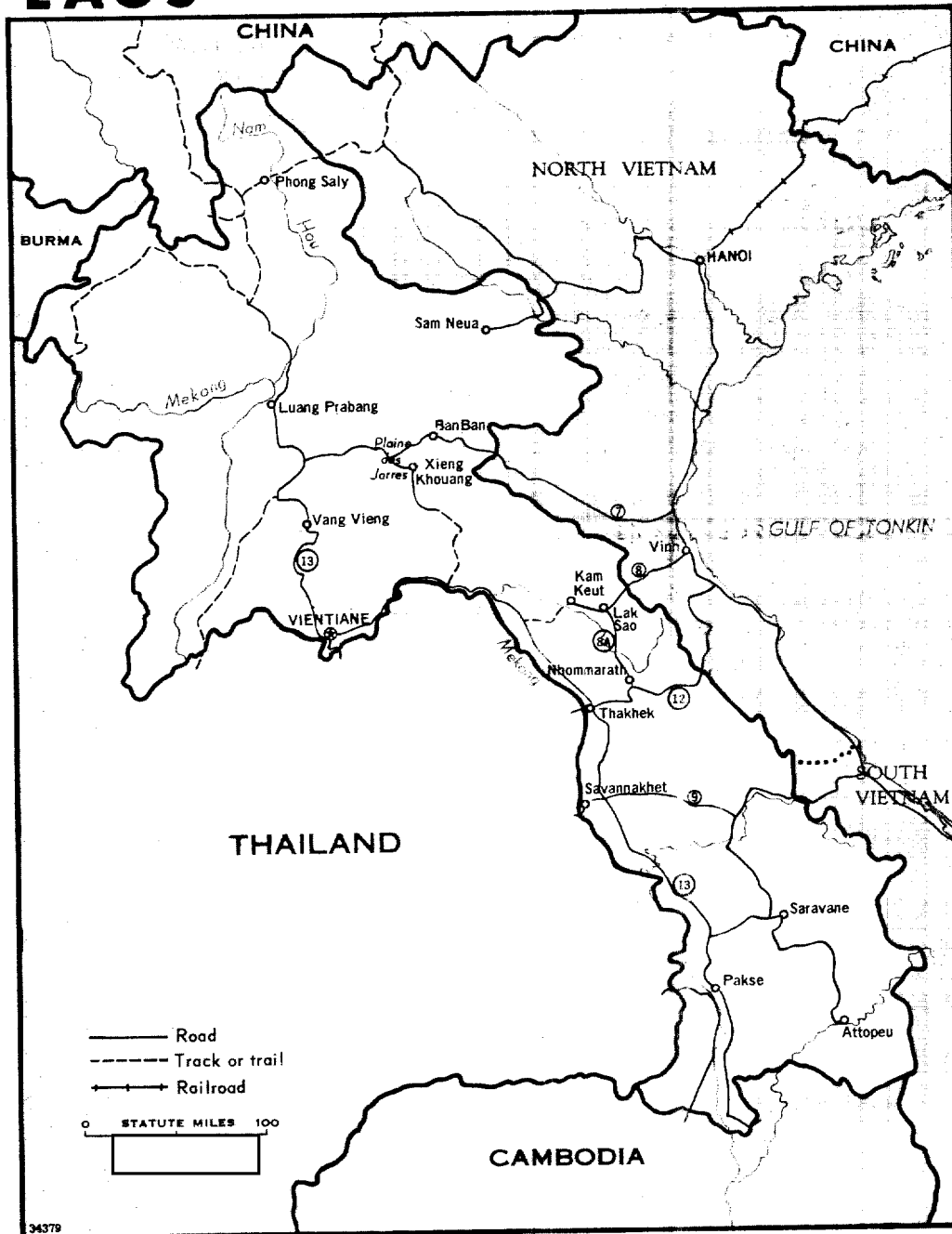
The students, however, are critical of the fact that key posts in the new government are held by

southerners, whom they regard as more prone to neutralism than northerners. There is also some suspicion of Catholics among Buddhist students, although the religious issue seems secondary to regional differences.

Only a slight rise in guerrilla activity was noted on the 20 December anniversary of the Viet Cong's Liberation Front, despite indications that a major effort was planned. Strategic hamlets continued last week to bear the brunt of Viet Cong attacks and harassments, and the weapons loss ratio again favored the guerrillas about two to one.

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LAOS



Laos: Neutralist and Pathet Lao representatives are continuing their efforts to negotiate an easing of tensions between the two factions.

At a 20 December meeting on the Plaine des Jarres, both sides called for an "early" meeting between Premier Souvanna and Prince Souphannouvong.

They also agreed in principle that elements of the coalition government should be transferred from Vientiane to the royal capital at Luang Prabang, which would be neutralized and placed under tripartite control. Additionally, both factions reiterated their support for the formation of a mixed police force in a neutralized Vientiane.

General Phoumi's right-wing faction, which was not represented at the meeting, is yet to be heard from. Phoumi might agree to some scheme for the neutralization of Luang Prabang. However, he has indicated that neutralization of Vientiane is contingent upon the willingness of the Pathet Lao to allow free movement in areas of Laos now under their control.

Both of the key towns in central Laos which fell to rightist forces during the past month have now been recaptured by the Communists. Lak Sao was retaken on 16 December and Kam Keut on the 19th.

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*Cyprus: New clashes between Greek and Turkish Cypriots appear likely following the violence in Nicosia on 21 and 22 December.

In talks with US Ambassador Wilkins yesterday, both President Makarios and Turkish Cypriot Vice President Kuchuk acknowledged the danger of the situation. Kuchuk said he was uncertain how long he could control his people. Because of the high state of tension on the island, Makarios said, he will now move more slowly than originally planned in pushing for constitutional change.

Makarios, in an interview with an Athens newspaper on 21 December, declared null and void the treaty by which Britain, Greece, and Turkey guaranteed the independence, territorial integrity and security of Cyprus. This treaty, a part of the Cyprus settlement of 1959, granted to the guarantors the right to intervene on Cyprus to preserve the "state of affairs established by the basic articles of the Cypriot constitution."

Turkish Cypriots view this treaty, providing as it does for direct intervention by Turkey, as an essential safeguard against attempts to absorb their community in a Greek Cypriot state. Makarios, however, regards the treaty as a basic obstacle to his efforts to revise the constitution. He charges that the treaty is contrary to provisions of the United Nations Charter and has warned that, if necessary, he will bring the issue before the UN.

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*Dominican Republic: [The sudden resignation of Emilio De Los Santos as head of the governing triumvirate has heightened uncertainty about the future of the shaky provisional regime]

[De Los Santos apparently resigned in protest over what he believed to be the brutal and unnecessary killing of 17 anti-government guerrillas-- including the leader of the pro-Castro 14th of June Political Group--by army troops on 21 December. The army commander in the area of the incident told the US Consul that the deaths were the unavoidable result of a fire fight]

[Foreign Minister Donald Reid Cabral reportedly has been appointed to succeed De Los Santos. Reid, who is currently out of the country, is expected to accept the appointment.]

[Reid's designation, although not popular with some members of the government, will probably forestall any immediate threat to the regime. However, neither of the other two members of the triumvirate is a strong leader. Pressure from extreme rightists, who have influence in the military, and from opportunistic leaders of the minority parties backing the government will continue to be a threat to the regime.]

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